

Meeting Summary

Event: Public Information Meeting #1

Date and Time: Tuesday, March 2, 2021, 6:00 PM

Location: Zoom Meeting Platform

1. Presentation Summary

The New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NHDOT) hosted the first Public Meeting for the Hampton 40797 Ocean Boulevard (NH Route 1A) Project on Tuesday, March 2, 2021, at 6:00 PM via the on-line Zoom meeting platform. The meeting was attended by approximately 66 people. Ms. Marcy Miller, Public Involvement Manager with FHI Studio, welcomed attendees. She introduced key project team members, reviewed the meeting agenda, and provided an overview of how to participate using the Zoom meeting platform. A PowerPoint presentation guided the discussion.

Ms. Jennifer Reczek, NHDOT's Project Manager, provided an overview of the project's background and objectives. She discussed the 2018 Hampton Beach Area Master Plan, project development, and the initial study limits. Ms. Reczek explained that the primary objectives of the project are to improve safety and mobility for all users; enhance multimodal connections along and across corridors; maintain vehicle safety and operations; balance mobility and parking needs; evaluate treatments to mitigate flooding impacts resulting from storm events and other drainage issues; minimize impacts to natural and cultural resources; and support the economic needs of the community. She then outlined the project development process, including identifying the Purpose and Need of the project, the data collection phase, alternatives analysis, evaluating environmental impacts of the alternative, receiving public input on the alternatives, and alternative selection and implementation.

Ms. Reczek discussed key considerations and what the project has accomplished so far. She explained that the project began in the late summer of 2020, and the project team started collecting data shortly thereafter. A public survey and interactive comment map were launched at that same time to gather feedback from the community about existing corridor transportation-related issues and opportunities. Ms. Reczek explained that NHDOT is considering coastal resiliency and sea-level rise as part of the Ocean Boulevard Project. NHDOT staff recently attended a symposium by the Hampton Beach Area Commission regarding coastal resiliency. The NH Department of Environmental Services Coastal Program is also conducting work to help mitigate sea-level rise and enhance coastal resiliency. At this stage, it has not been determined exactly how coastal resiliency and sea-level rise will be incorporated into the Ocean Boulevard Project.

Ms. Stephanie-Dyer Carroll, Cultural Resources Manager with FHI Studio, provided an overview of the regulatory processes for the project. She explained that potential impacts to natural and cultural resources are assessed through the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and related regulatory processes. She reviewed a list of potential species that might be found in the project area and explained that the team conducted an initial cultural resources review. Ms. Dyer-Carroll then explained the Section 106, Section 4(f), and Section 6(f) considerations for the project. She said that those attendees

interested in learning more about becoming a Consulting Party under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) should contact Jamie Sikora at the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). She also shared a link to a brochure that outlines how to become a Consulting Party and the role of consulting parties in the Section 106 process.

Ms. Miller provided an overview of community outreach process. She explained that a postcard was distributed to approximately 2,700 residents and businesses along the corridor in August 2020. The postcard advertised a short community survey and provided a link to an interactive map, where the public could provide comments or questions in specific areas of interest. Ms. Miller shared a summary of the data collected on the interactive map and the survey results to-date. She said the main concerns had been balancing various travel modes, friction between pedestrians and vehicles, and impacts on business operations. She encouraged attendees to participate and leave comments on the interactive map, as it will soon close.

In order to facilitate a group discussion and receive additional public feedback Ms. Miller explained that the meeting presentation would pause and the attendees would divide into breakout rooms. She provided an overview of how to participate in the breakout room sessions. She reiterated that attendees had signed up for one of three segments: Segment 1 – NH 1A from State Park Road at South Beach to NH 101 (Church Street), Segment 2 - NH 1A north of NH 101 (Church Street) through the NH 101E (Winnacunnet Road) intersection, or Segment 3 - NH 1A north of NH 101E (Winnacunnet Road) through the NH 27 (High Street) intersection. The meeting attendees broke into the groups for approximately 30 minutes. Summaries of the breakout room discussions are provided below.

Following the breakout room discussions, Mr. Rick Plenge, HDR Consultant Team Project Manager, provided an overview of the alternative's development process. He said the project team is currently evaluating multi-modal traffic data. Due to COVID-19, the team is relying on historic traffic data and plans to potentially supplement that with Summer 2021 data. Mr. Plenge explained that input from the PAC, survey, and interactive map will be included in the evaluation of traffic data. He then summarized the primary design elements that the study team is evaluating in the development of the alternatives, including enhanced multi-modal facilities, vehicle circulation patterns, lane/parking configurations, intersection configurations, water quality and green infrastructure, and technology-based solutions.

Ms. Reczek concluded the formal presentation portion of the meeting by explaining the next steps. She said the project is in the data collection phase and the project team is conducting an existing conditions analysis. This data will provide the foundation for the development of alternatives. Ms. Reczek reviewed the project schedule, stating that the alternatives development would occur over the next year and a half, with the identification of a preferred alternative in the winter of 2022, and NEPA completion in the spring of 2023. She said that the survey would be available through the end of this year and encouraged attendees to stay involved in the project.

2. Breakout Room Discussions

Segment 1 Discussion

Below is a summary of the key takeaways from the Segment 1 Breakout Room session. The discussion was moderated by Jennifer Reczek and comments were summarized by Laura Parete

(FHI). Attendees of this segment voiced concerns about safety and roadway issues and potential improvements on NH 1A from the State Park Road at South Beach to NH 101 (Church Street).

- Community members would like new sidewalks, bike lanes, better traffic flow, and parking throughout the corridor.
- Flashing pedestrian lights would be helpful to install at crosswalks. Residents are concerned about high vehicle speeds during the nighttime hours and off-season due to the open roadways.
- Residents would like a crosswalk to be added between the southern end of Hampton Beach State Park and the State Pier.
- There are uneven roadway heights due to layering of pavement. This contributes to flooding of properties and businesses from D Street through I Street. Community members would like better drainage.
- There are many safety concerns about Church Street. There are unsafe pedestrian crossings, higher vehicle speed, and the roadway is narrow and becomes congested. There are many car crashes in this area. The high traffic volumes and high number of trucks and buses are incompatible with the neighborhood street context. Community members would like to have these issues addressed. They suggested widening the road, placing speed humps on Church Street, or installing a stop sign for southbound Ocean Boulevard traffic. They asked that potential traffic flow improvements carefully consider the context of Church Street also being a neighborhood street.
- There are backups at Church Street during the summer months. The Hampton Police Department has had to provide two to three officers to get beachgoers safely through the parking lot and across the travel lane. The intersection should be reconfigured to move people and vehicles more safely and efficiently.
- A community member suggested providing a parking terminal on Route 1 so that visitors could be shuttled from Route 1 to Route 1A during peak visitation.
- The community would like enhanced wayfinding signage that is branded for Hampton. The signage could include directions to state parks, beaches, and local attractions.
- The southern driveway at Hampton Beach State Park needs to be upgraded.

Segment 2 Discussion

Below is a summary of the key takeaways from the Segment 2 Breakout Room session. The discussion was moderated by Trent Zanes (NH DOT) and comments were summarized by Stephanie Dyer-Carroll. Attendees of this session voiced concerns about safety and roadway issues and potential improvements on NH 1A north of NH 101 (Church Street) through the NH 101E (Winnacunnet Road) intersection.

- This is a residential area, but not “friendly” to residents.
- There is no dedicated facility for bicyclists.
- There aren’t enough crosswalks in the area and the existing crosswalks are dangerous for pedestrians and bicyclists.
- The center median parking is problematic.
- Visitors unloading to go to the beach must cross the road, which can be dangerous.
- There are issues with residents backing out of driveways.

- In this segment, the road is two-lanes in either direction. This is over designed, which leads to excessive speeding along the corridor. Each year during the Seafood Festival traffic is restricted to one lane in either direction. This forces traffic to slow down. The study should evaluate one-lane in each direction. This could help enhance the potential for bike lanes and pedestrian sidewalks, as well as provide possible greenspace.
- There are drainage problems within the roadway, but water also comes up over the seawall.
- The pedestrian facilities near Boars Head are inadequate – they are wider in other areas.
- The Hampton Beach Area Commission had a public hearing where good ideas were expressed. This should be incorporated into the planning process.
- A dedicated turn lane is necessary at Dumas Avenue.
- Residents need to be able to get around traffic congestion to the south in Hampton Beach.
- Sidewalk height differential is unsafe and difficult to traverse. Sidewalks are not ADA compliant.
- Moving parking from the center to the seawall would help with crossings. No value in parking on the west side of the road due to more crossing need to get to the beach. Backing out of parking is dangerous.
- Could speed bumps be added to the segment to slow traffic?
- During strong tides and storms, along with water overtopping the seawall, rocks are often tossed onto the sidewalk area so if parking were to be shifted toward the seawall that risk to vehicles should be considered.
- Drainage problems in the road are associated with the strong tide.
- Tourists avoid the beach at high tide due to lack of beach area to actually use.

Segment 3 Discussion

Below is a summary of the key takeaways from the Segment 3 Breakout Room session. The discussion was moderated by Keith Cota (HDR) and comments were summarized by Marcy Miller. Attendees of this session voiced concerns about safety and roadway issues and potential improvements on NH 1A north of NH 101E (Winnacunnet Road) through the NH 27 (High Street) intersection.

- People enjoy walking along the seawall in this area.
- There are problems with visibility and turning.
- The crosswalk at 18th Street is dangerous for pedestrians and bicyclists.
- Lights from vehicles on High Street are blinding to pedestrians at nighttime.
- There are conflicts between pedestrians and vehicles at the side streets, due to vehicles turning on to and off of Ocean Boulevard.
- Participants said that the Winnacunnet Road intersection is confusing and unsafe for vehicles, pedestrians, and bicyclists. This area should be improved.
- The vehicular travel lanes are too wide in this section, leading to increased speed. People suggested that bike lanes and pedestrian crosswalks could be added to the area. The pedestrian walkway could be wider along the seawall.
- Participants would like this section of the corridor to be more park-like, with landscaping. This would improve the residential nature of the area.

- Participants suggested moving the seawall back because of sea level rise and making Ocean Boulevard and Kings Highway a one-way couplet with Ocean Boulevard running northbound and Kings Highway running southbound. Another participant disagreed with putting NH Route 1A traffic on a residential street.
- Wayfinding signage should be enhanced.
- The aesthetics within this portion of the corridor aren't pleasing.
- There are no places to pull over and look at the ocean, bathrooms, or picnic facilities.
- Drainage is an issue.
- The speed limit needs to be enforced.

3. General Meeting Discussion

Questions

Q – Will the Public Meeting Summary be posted?

A – The Public Meeting Summary will be posted on NHDOT's Ocean Boulevard Project page <https://www.nh.gov/dot/projects/hampton40797/index.htm>.

Q – Is Ashworth Avenue included in this study? It is an integral part of the traffic pattern.

A – Ashworth Avenue is not part of the roadway improvement project. It is being included in the traffic analysis to make sure that we understand the traffic patterns in this area.

Q – Where is the Hampton Beach Cottages Historic District located?

A – The cottages are located at the south-end of the project area north of the southern driveway to Hampton Beach State Park.

Q – Is the survey from the North Beach residents included in the results from the Ocean Boulevard Project's survey?

A – The North Beach residents' survey was not incorporated into the Ocean Boulevard Project's survey. The two surveys were intended to collect different data. The North Beach residents' survey will be included in the project's overall data collection efforts and draft report.

Q – What does it mean for the people whose property is shown on the map within the project limits?

A – The shading on the map graphic is intended to show the approximate study limits. It does not depict defined project limits or property impacts. NHDOT tries to minimize any property impacts to the extent possible. The design team anticipates that reconfiguring the existing roadway and space will occur within the existing ROW. Although temporary and permanent impacts outside the ROW may be required in some areas.

Q – Is Ashworth Avenue part of NH Route 1A?

A – It is designated as NH Route 1A southbound, but it is not maintained by the NHDOT. It is a Town of Hampton roadway.

Q – Is streetlighting part of this project? Light pollution is an issue.

A – NHDOT will evaluate the need to install new lighting and consider light pollution.

General Comments

- The project team received comments about the Hampton Harbor Bridge Project. The team explained that the bridge project is separate from and lies to the south of the Ocean Boulevard Project. A Public Hearing for that project is to be held this spring.
- Some felt that the 2020 summer traffic pattern instituted due to the COVID-19 pandemic did not work well for residents last summer.
- Annie Ropeik, a reporter for the New Hampshire Public Radio (NHPR), provided a link to a climate change reporting survey: <https://bit.ly/3kERcyp/>.